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Took Notes at Sprague Staff Meetings

Woman Was 'Spy' for Gonzalez

By Jeremiah O'Leary

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A Bethesda woman today said she was the "spy" on the staff of the House Assassinations Committee's chief counsel for the committee's chairman.

Edyth H. Baish, 55, said she acted to keep Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez' office informed of the activities of the chief counsel, Richard A. Sprague, out of loyalty to the Texas Democrat.

She said she wanted the chairman to know of "the details I saw as disruptive . . . it is of the utmost importance that it be understood by all that I was acting on my own and not under instruction of any other person."

"I was the 'spy' who kept the chairman's office informed on what was going on over at the committee offices," said Baish. "I guess there isn't any other word for it. But it was my own idea and I did it because I found it necessary, my duty, to report at great length and in fine detail the conditions and happenings within the staff offices that jeopardize Mr.



EDYTH BAISH
An act of 'loyalty'

Gonzalez' position as chairman and sabotage his efforts."

GONZALEZ RESIGNED as chairman Wednesday after attempting unsuccessfully last month to fire Sprague, and the House will vote next week on whether to accept Gonzalez' resignation. It is probable that the committee will cease to exist at

the end of this month when its funding runs out.

Gonzalez, who is in his San Antonio, Tex., home recovering from flu, previously said he had a reliable pipeline into what was going on in Sprague's offices. Several times he recounted what had taken place in Sprague staff meetings shortly after they took place, even though he and Sprague were no longer speaking to each other.

None of the memos Baish wrote to Gonzalez' administrative assistant, Gail J. Beagle, nor her frequent phone calls to him concerned information relating to the assassinations under investigation, she said. The committee is supposed to investigate the murders of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., but little has been accomplished because of budget problems and internal wrangling among the chairman, the other 11 committee members and the 73-member staff assembled by Sprague.

BAISH SAID SHE never dealt directly with Gonzalez. She said she **See PROBE, A-4**

openly took notes at staff meetings as part of her job as office manager for the so-called JFK Task Force. Within an hour of typing these notes for Sprague and his senior associates, Baish said, a copy was on Gonzalez' desk.

"Obviously, I didn't advertise what I was doing to Sprague's people, but all of them knew I had come to the staff after 4½ years in Mr. Gonzalez' office as a part-time employee and that I had been recommended by Gail Beagle for the job," Baish said. "Furthermore, Mr. Sprague told me when I was hired that 'Congressman Gonzalez and his aide are your bosses.'"

Baish, a divorcee who also runs a secretarial service from her home, said it caused her "great pain and regret" to be reporting on the doings at Sprague headquarters.

Baish cites what she said were

"unprecedented and ridiculous dictates to a committee chairman and members of Congress by a nonmember staffer — an egomaniac — Sprague."

IT WAS SHE, Baish said, who provided Gonzalez' office with the names and salaries of the employees hired by Sprague. In all, she said, she sent written reports of seven staff meetings to Gonzalez.

Much of what she reported had to do with hiring and wage practices. Describing her own job interview with Sprague, Baish said, "He made it short and sweet. He advised me of the spot I was to fill as office manager of the JFK Task Force and asked what salary we had discussed at our first interview. I reminded him we had talked about \$16,500. He said, 'How about \$18,000?' I agreed happily. Sprague then said, 'Gail and the congressman will be your bosses. The administrator will be your immediate supervisor.'"

When she began to believe that there was a plan within the committee and staff to usurp Gonzalez' chairmanship, she said, she began to watch and listen and report anything she thought would be harmful to the chairman. By the time the House voted to re-establish the committee and Gonzalez officially became chairman, she said, "all important data had been delivered to Gonzalez' office by me, both typewritten and by mouth."

"SPRAGUE WAS VERY angry at Chairman Gonzalez and the U.S. Congress," Baish said. "To have on file a record of all that was said at the chief counsel's staff meetings, I initiated the practice of taking the meeting minutes and a copy of these was immediately delivered to the chairman's office."

At one staff meeting, she said, Sprague expressed his anger at Congress for suggesting salary cuts and staff reductions. When one staffer asked if Gonzalez is a friend or foe, she said, "Sprague lost control and berated Congress and the chairman."

She said Gonzalez, aware from her reports of what was happening, began trying harder to let Sprague know where he stood.

"Sprague grew in anger," she added. "He projected Gonzalez

to the staff as an unfeeling, insensitive, ignorant, ridiculous chairman and he conveyed that he was lobbying for the support of the other members of the committee, and succeeding. The staff was believing, and impressed."

BAISH RECALLED a final committee meeting was set for Feb. 16.

"From the tone of that last staff meeting," she said, "with Sprague's rule-or-ruin war whoop coming through loud and clear, I got word to Chairman Gonzalez' office that to wait until the meeting would mean disaster for the chairman. . . ."

The order firing Sprague was handed delivered to the chief counsel three hours later.